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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION KUWAIT MARCH 18-23: SECRETARY
POWELL'S VISIT, GMEI, IRAQ, SHEIKH YASEEN ASSASSINATION

1. SUMMARY: The assassination of Sheikh Yaseen has pushed an evolving positive perception of the Greater Middle East Initiative resulting from Secretary's Powell's recent visit to Kuwait off the op/ed pages March 23, with the US now being cast as the willing stooge of Israeli perfidy. "Jews are known to be the killers of prophets and the inciters of wars," says Kuwaiti Islamist MP Walid al-Tabtabaei in an op/ed in independent "Al Watan," while the editor-in-chief of leading Arabic daily "Al Rai al Amm" opines bitterly that the Yaseen's death occurred "because his killer holds power of attorney over us, power of attorney from the one known to all." END SUMMARY.

2. "Why Has Sheikh Yaseen Fallen"
Jassem Boodai editor-in-chief of independent Al-Rai Al-A'am wrote: "Ariel Sharon finally succeeded to pin one more star of criminality on his shoulder. Sharon successfully exploited absolute American support from an "ideal partner" in the war on terrorism. He also exploited Arab weakness, collusion, primitivism, and Arab division to accomplish a new massacre. Whether one agrees or not with Sheikh Yaseen's political or military methods, one cannot but respect his resistance. Ahmad Yaseen fell because he was active and a doer, and because his killer holds power of attorney over us, power of attorney from the one known to all."

3. "How Sad"
Ahmad Al-Jarallah editor-in-chief of independent Al-Seyassah: "Sheikh Yaseen's assassination as he was coming out of a mosque exposed the weakness of all Arabs. The Arabs' complete and utter weakness presented Israel's PM the opportunity to implement his plans in the region. Now that Sheikh Yaseen is dead, what have the Arab leaders done other than to express outrage? No amount of condemnation is going to stop Sharon from going forward with his plans. Instead of condemning the act, Arabs must prepare a strategy to counter and foil Sharon's plans. It is sad that the most vicious attacks by Sharon are not drawing the attention of Europe or America."

4. "Sharon"
Dr. Waleed Al-Tabtabai wrote in independent Al-Watan (3/23): "The Jews have finally done it and killed the dignified sheikh. However, it is no surprise, since Jews are known to be the killers of prophets, and inciters of wars. Israel, who is armed to the teeth with the most dangerous weapons, conspires against an old frail sick quadriplegic. This sick old man who suffered various illnesses was considered by Israel as its most dangerous of enemies and eventually killed him. What cowards you are, Arab rulers."

5. "The Martyr"
Fuad Al-Hashem wrote in independent Al-Watan (3/23): "The assassination of the founder and leader of Hamas, sheikh Ahmad Yaseen, was a stupid Israeli act. No more stupid than their decision to occupy southern Lebanon for twenty-two years, without any clear advantage, only to eventually withdraw as if nothing ever happened. Israelis believe that death is the best sort of punishment for the Palestinians. But, they don't know that for Palestinians who live on less than three dollars per month, without housing, or education and with no health care, death is the best solution, and no harm in taking a few Israelis on the way [suicide bombers]. It can also be said, that for the Israeli extreme right, Sheikh Yaseen's assassination was clever, because it would prolong the cycle of violence for another fifty years, which by then, Jews will have been able to control the whole of Palestine."

6. "Reforms From Within"
Mohammed Khalil wrote in independent Al-Anba (3/23): "Secretary of State Colin Powell's announcement that he discussed Middle East reforms with Kuwaiti officials and agreed that reforms must occur from within, in fact,

consolidated this American project which encountered strong opposition from most Arab countries. All agreed that as long as distinctive social and cultural characteristics within the Arab world were not abused, reforms should not cause any problems. One aspect of criticism taken up by the Kuwaiti officials during their meetings with the Secretary was the way in which Washington initially put forward the reforms initiative. It was brought up in a provocative manner, where various countries were required to implement it, without holding dialogue or discussion on the issue. Washington must be more transparent, so that the doors of dialogue can be opened to all."

17. "The Unfortunate Middle East"

Emad Al-Seif wrote in independent Al-Qabas (3/20): "A great argument is taking place these days about the United States adopting and marketing the Greater Middle East Initiative. As usual, for us Arabs, our political and traditional positions come before anything else. Therefore, a large section of intellectuals are against the American initiative because of the latter's bias toward Israel. The crux of the matter is that the responsibility of achieving reforms falls on the Arab nations. Achieving democracy, respect for human rights, education and economic reforms are the goals of all reform movements in the Arab world. Arab peoples do not need an initiative or advice from anyone."

18. "Great Middle East in a Narrow Scope"

Abdul Jalil Al-Gharaballi wrote in independent Al-Qabas (3/21): "The goal of the GMEI is to eradicate the cores of extremism in the Arab world and to thrust Arab countries toward economic reforms. However, the areas of tension existing in the Arab world are the result of a domestic imbalance of justice. Another face of injustice is represented by the United States and its direct involvement and collusion with the Zionist entity in confiscating the rights of the Palestinian people. If the US is serious about eliminating extremism, then equally it must reign in Israeli violations. It serves no purpose to see the situation in the Arab countries from one eye, and close the other on the Palestinian situation."

19. "Spain . An Emotional Decision"

Dr. Ahmad Al-Rubei wrote in independent Al-Qabas (3/20): "The new Spanish Prime Minister sounds like a Middle Eastern politician, who is more moved by personal emotions than by his nation's interests. His decision to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq will weaken the international front against terrorism. It is a surrender to International terrorism. It is naive to believe that this position would protect Spain against terrorism. His decision holds a great symbolic value, in that it sends a message to all terrorists that the recent Spain terrorist operation can lead to the unsettling of the international coalition against terrorism. The Spanish PM knows well, that without security in Iraq, and without defeating the idea of the division of Iraq, international terrorism will grow and increase."

10. "The War for Freedom"

Dr. Ayed Al-Manna wrote in independent Al-Watan (3/20): "Whatever drawbacks or shortcomings caused by foreign or American occupation, there is no doubt that the liberation of Iraq would not have been possible in any other way. If the Iraqis are suffering now because of lack of security, the near future is looking up to the Iraqis with hope, security, political freedom and economic development. If some Iraqis are complaining about the state of affairs now, it won't hurt to wait until June 30 when they will be handed over authority to rule their country."

9. "One Year After Iraq's Occupation"

Hamed Abdullah Al-Ali wrote in independent Al-Watan (3/20): "On this day one year ago, the United States and Britain invaded Iraq on the premise of liberating the people of Iraq and to make the world a safer place. Things are worse after one year. While the American President stood before his troops, and declared the world today is living a crucial hour in defending freedom, Baghdad was vibrating from explosions which targeted hotels frequented by westerners. After one year of Iraq's occupation, events in Iraq signify 1) the extent of ignorance, prejudice and barbarity of the neo-cons who are drawing up America's policy; 2) the extent of stupidity of all followers of the neo-cons; 3 the extent of hypocrisy and lies of the engulfing the politics and media world that we live in."